

INTRODUCTION

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throughout the country, the central administration remains in the capital; urban units are dispatched to the countryside at times, if any show of internal political resistance is sensed. TTM members also sometimes engage in struggles with each other over political spoils; but too little is known to analyze internal strains within this paramilitary, secret-police organization. The TTM has proved particularly useful for carrying out the murders of outspoken individual political opponents and for crushing draconically any threat of strikes in the Port-au-Prince business community.

Little is known of the antecedents of TTM members. While it is customary among the elite to describe these myrmidons as "trash," some of them are literate, have some education, vaunt a political ideology—a kind of nationalist-*négritude* mystique, with strong Fascist elements—and differ dramatically from the ragged, illiterate followers of the warlords of pre-1915 Haiti. In fact, the TTM lieutenants are a direct, if somewhat deformed, product of the Estimé regime, a decade of structurally unsound prosperity, a culturally nationalistic ideology, and, more remotely, of the United States occupation itself.

With regard to the army, Duvalier has followed a policy of careful attrition. While the United States Marine Corps "mission" was (probably unknowingly) serving to immobilize opposition, Duvalier began to change the character of the army general staff. In the course of less than seven years he completely revamped the leadership of the army five times; this process not only kept the colonels off balance but allowed the President to reward loyal younger followers—principally those with dark skins, it is said—with rapid promotions.

The relationship between the Duvalier regime and the Catholic clergy has been one of increasing alienation. At times members of the clergy stood high in the regime, two having even served as members of the cabinet; but not the slightest Church resistance has been tolerated. The low point in Duvalier-Church relations was the interruption of a mass by an armed TTM unit in downtown Port-au-Prince; leading members of the hierarchy later were summarily ejected from the country, and the Jesuit order was banned. Church power has waned significantly, both in the capital and in the countryside, as the regime has consolidated itself. Some observers believe that Duvalier is not so unwise as to aim at the complete elimination of the Church, but that he hopes instead to "nationalize" the clergy on some mutually agreeable basis.

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643 At the same time, the President has expressed his favorable interest
771 in vodoun and is said to practice it; this statement, however, has
795 overtones of malevolence that are not appropriate. Vodoun is a religion, though it lacks a centralized priestly hierarchy or administrative organization. Outside the elite, Catholicism in Haiti has always been colored by vodoun elements. The Haitian people as a whole invest no effort in distinguishing what is "really Catholic" from what is not, in their religious practices; in this regard Haitian countrymen do not really differ from folk practitioners of Catholicism anywhere. By its misreading of the piety of the Haitian masses, and its unceasing hostility to vodoun—quite different from the church policy in the so-called "Indian countries" of Latin America—the Church had failed to secure its influence over the Haitian people. In contrast, Duvalier's understanding of Haitian religious sociology has proved superior, and is consistent with the *authentique* ideology of the 1940s, though doubtless much more extreme in its implications.

642 Finally, the Duvalier regime has invaded such institutions as the
871 National University and the trade unions, and maintains close surveillance over any individuals it regards as politically suspicious. Loyalty oaths are required at the university; a public press no longer exists; the unions, never strong, are now entirely powerless. But it should be clear from this description of the Duvalier regime that repression is not the key to Duvalier power so much as the means for perpetuating that power under Haitian conditions. The key to Duvalier power is to be found instead in the structure of Haitian society, in the social history of the past two decades, and in the policy of the United States, weakened by its inescapable preference for "stability" over "radicalism." In his own way, President Duvalier is as radical as he can be; but he is no Castro. It is now an open secret that Haiti's support for sanctions against Cuba approved at Punta del Este was matched by economic concessions from the United States; that the Marines, knowingly or not, immobilized anti-Duvalier opposition in a period when its supporters could be picked off, driven into exile, or jailed; that the official Duvalier offer of Môle St. Nicholas to the United States as a substitute for Guantánamo, though irrelevant, was warmly reassuring to some North American political thinkers; and that Duvalier, while he employs considerable "blackmail diplomacy" in his dealings with the United States and is now out of favor, is still considered "reliable" in that most important respect.

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prestige, and the normal fulfillment of dignity, were thus frustrated in their efforts. They began to see that the Emperor intended to withhold from them freedom, room for the exercise of ability or power, fullness of life in whatever form. Not only was there little opportunity for achieving prestige; the repressive and contemptuous attitude of Dessalines denied them even ordinary negative respect, without which dignity of life is impossible.

By confiscation of vacant and falsely claimed estates, Dessalines created a vast public domain. He did not hesitate to secure other lands which he considered valuable, resorting to arbitrary and often cruel means—even, it is said, to forgery and murder—to dispossess those who stood firm in their claims. This attack on private property added other dissidents to his enemies—men who felt themselves clearly in the right legally and morally, men who with clear consciences joined the movement to put down a tyrant. The land thus acquired was leased in parcels at an annual rent to the highest bidders.

The Emperor was blind to the normal human needs of the better elements of the population. He deprived them of property in land, the only basis they knew for wealth and independence; he forbade enterprises undertaken by individual initiative; he continually wounded delicate sensibilities. The Emperor was not a man to spare people's feelings, and he dared use the frank but dangerous words Negro and mulatto. He once shouted to a group of pleaders for position: "*Prenez garde à vous, nègres et mulâtres! Nous avons tous combattu contre les blancs; les biens que nous avons conquis en versant notre sang, appartiennent à nous tous; j'entends qu'ils soient partagés avec équité!*" It was not only Dessalines' idea of "equity" which aroused the *anciens libres* but his use of the descriptive nouns they hated.

The colored people were well aware of the hostility of Dessalines to their group. He was inferior to them in learning, and knew it. He was certainly, by the world's judgment, inferior to them in birth. His very deficiencies by comparison with his colored subjects made him hate them more: for example, he was passionately fond of dancing, preferring compliments on his grace to praise of his statesmanship; yet his awkwardness on the ballroom floor even

6. Although there are no records extant to show the exact amount of land which Dessalines succeeded in bringing into state ownership, it is estimated that more than two thirds of all the productive plantations in Haiti in 1806 were in the hands of the government. Other estimates range as high as ninety per cent.

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175 beside other ex-slaves was too evident to avert ridicule, which
 643 Dessalines quickly noted. Few opportunities escaped the Emperor,
 563 therefore, of making the light-skinned Haitians quake in their boots.
 661 He wrote to Pétion (August 24, 1804), leader of the colored people,
 that in his slaughter of white Frenchmen he had often been "unable"
 to distinguish between whites and light-colored Haitians. Pétion
 and his friends knew that Dessalines did not regret his inability to
 make the distinction.⁷

175 Possibly Dessalines was clear-sighted enough to realize that the old
 563 distinctions of color, if allowed to continue in the new state as in-
 643 dicative of social prestige, might cause endless strife within the
 nation. Possibly, on the other hand, he wished to make the lighter-
 skinned Haitians realize that he, a Negro, was more than their equal.
 Whatever his underlying motives, he was impatient with the struggle
 for prestige. The steps he took to eradicate distinctions based upon
 color were characterized by his usual blunt tactlessness. In 1805 he
 informed Pétion, the outstanding mulatto general, that a union of
 black and colored people was essential to the happiness of the Em-
 pire; he said he wanted the Haitian people to become *frenized* by this
 union, so that there would be no longer any important difference of
 skin color. All this was preface to a proposal that Pétion, as the ablest
 of the mulattoes, should marry the Emperor's black daughter,
 Cécilienne. Pétion, refined, highly educated, and gently cynical, was
 considerably perturbed and frankly embarrassed by the suddenness of
 this radical suggestion. His reply, that he was not inclined to marry
 at all, offended Dessalines and made him suspect a slight, but he
 dismissed Pétion with the pointed suggestion that he "think the
 matter over." Pétion knew, as the Emperor did not, that one of his
 aides-de-camp, Chancy, was not only in love with Cécilienne but
 had already got her with child. It is entirely possible, too, that he was
 aware of the growing underground opposition to Dessalines and
 that, as the Emperor's star was beginning to decline, he did not wish

[721] 7. It must be said to the credit of the black masses that they did not relish the sys-
 tematic slaughter of the whites which so pleased Dessalines. Negro cultivators fre-
 quently collected potential victims, hiding them and aiding their escape from the
 country. The repugnance of the masses for such massacre was so evident that their
 generals had at times to drive them at bayonet's point. "The blacks of the plain be-
 haved very well," said an exile in a letter (June 1, 1804) written from Jamaica to
 Moïse de Saint-Méry. Madiou says that after the massacre of the whites some
 Haitian blacks abandoned their country and went to join former masters in a foreign
 land.

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to ally himself with the ruling family. When Dessalines shortly discovered his daughter's condition, he burst into maledictions against all mulattoes, saying that they had plotted this disgrace to him and to his family. He went so far as to speak of having them all executed. 175
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The Emperor's determination, and all his measures, could not quench the social ambition of his leading subjects. They bore what must be borne, conspiring meanwhile to get rid of him. They still had the advantage over the masses of a superior education, and they knew the path to eminence, once the obstacle of the Emperor was removed.

Nothing was done during the reign of Dessalines to cultivate the minds of the laboring class. Discipline backed by force was the guiding principle in dealing with them. Instead of trying to educate his people to understand their duties and to take an active part in statecraft, Dessalines—his generals and counselors, mulatto and black alike, thoroughly approving—used only compulsion. There was actually little difference between the attitude of this ruling clique toward the mass of laborers and that of their former white owners. Both looked upon them as cattle. A few of his advisers tried to persuade the Emperor to provide moral and religious education for the people so that they would not be seduced into completely evil ways, but the Emperor replied, "You are wrong: the laborers can be controlled only by fear of punishment and even death; I shall lead them only by these means; my 'mole' shall be the bayonet." 175
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In short, between 1804 and 1806 no prominent figure in Haitian life seems even to have dreamed of "liberal" institutions. Those who had education, knowledge, and culture preserved them carefully for themselves. The wisdom, even the possibility, of enlightening the masses was doubted. Most Haitians remained in complete ignorance of what went on in the outside world. 175
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Dessalines was killed by ambush near Port-au-Prince on October 17, 1806. The mulattoes were generally supposed to have planned the assassination, for it was well known that they had no cause to be fond of him. His callousness had raised up enemies in all walks of life. The cultivators were glad he was gone, because of his harshness. They were virtually slaves again in all but name; it was reported that upon his personal estates he had made unsatisfactory workers run the gauntlet between lines of soldiers armed with thorny switches, and 175
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175 such an example of rigor might spread. The moral element of the
 643 population had long looked askance at his libertinage; his first act
 • 661 upon entering a town during a visit of state was regularly to have his
 [103] aides select for him the most attractive females in the vicinity, with
 whom he would spend more time than at the business of governing.
 Not even his army was sorrowful over his death. He had let his
 loyal troops go for months without pay, and then, reviewing a group
 of them one day, taunted and railed at them for their ragged uni-
 forms. "You look as naked as a bunch of old bottles!" he cried.

Dessalines had restored order to his country and had founded a
 state. Both achievements rested upon a display of force which in-
 spired cringing fear and denied normal human aspirations. His entire
 social and economic order was based upon the subservience of the
 many to the few.

2. Christophe (1807-1820)

175 Until 1807 all Haitians had the same political background—the
 178 French colonial régime, revolution, the governorship of Toussaint,
 and the stern rule of Dessalines. Now the common path forked. Two
 avenues were opened up during the next dozen years, one by Chris-
 tophe, the other by his Southern and mulatto rival, Pétion. The
 former was the road of discipline, hard work, and feudal control;
 the latter was one of persuasion, *laissez faire*, and small properties.
 Haiti ultimately chose the second.

175 The logical successor to Dessalines was his powerful Negro hench-
 643 man, Christophe.⁸ This black general felt so certain of his leadership
 642 that he did not even bother to attend the *Assemblée Constituante*
 662 which was to choose the new head of state. The mulattoes, however,
 had agreed among themselves that they had had enough of rule by
 ignorant ex-slaves. They consequently performed the very skillful
 manoeuvre of preparing a constitution which should effectively
 shear a new president of dictatorial power; this done, they dutifully
 elected Christophe to the presidential office. The wrathful general
 peremptorily declined to rule by virtue of so anaemic a document,
 and led his army southward to demand proper respect for his august

8. The name Christophe was taken from the English Caribbean island of St. Chris-
 topher, on which this black slave was born. Later in life he took as his first name
 Henry, spelling it in the English fashion rather than the French, as an indication of his
 wholehearted admiration of English people and English ways.

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175 The result was entirely different from Boyer's expectations. As a
 114 French critic graphically puts it, the Haitians

703 who had never had more than a borrowed energy—that inspired by fear of
 French invasion—when they saw themselves freed, by a solemn treaty,
 from all attack on their coasts, seemed to allow their arms to drop relaxed
 at their sides, saying, *Let's take a rest*. The soldier who up till now had
 squeezed his body into a uniform and had subjected himself to European
 discipline, shouldering his arms, staring straight ahead as if seeing nothing,
 now began to leave unbuttoned the uniform which choked him, dragged a
 mattress into his sentry-box so that he might sleep through his watch, and
 let his cross slip to the earth never to pick it up again."

175 In short, the Haitian army as a disciplined force ceased to exist, and
 701 with it all authority of its officers. Boyer had counted upon the
 703 army to enforce the provisions of the Code Rural, but now a soldier's
 671 life was a paid sinecure. By gaining political security Haiti had in-
 493 advertently lost its last chance of economic prosperity through a
 system of forced labor.

175 Wherever the Code was put into partial operation, revenue from
 423 plantations continued to decline. The price of real estate dropped
 433 proportionately. It was a simple matter for workmen who had
 435 signed contracts to avoid carrying out their stipulations, and just as
 446 simple to evade the law requiring fifteen acres' minimum for a single
 holding. Practically every Haitian wanted to own a bit of land; once
 he had acquired his bit, however small, he had (or so he felt) earned
 an exemption from directed labor.

175 Only on estates near the few big towns, where government
 671 officials were concentrated, was there much pretense of trying to
 625 enforce the Code. Sentries at the gates of Port-au-Prince were
 661 authorized to confiscate plantains, yams, or fruit brought by any
 worker who, in contravention of the Code, had strayed to market on
 a forbidden day, but sentries soon acquired the habit of not seeing
 countryfolk who passed the gates. Reports kept cropping up that
 rural policemen were robbing poor cultivators of their coffee under
 pretense of protecting them from the penalties for breach of the
 law; this suggests that the Code was used rather for graft than for
 the stimulation of agriculture.

175 By and large, however, the Code was merely ignored. Agents
 671 could not be found who were willing to stand in any community

625 44. Lepelletier de Saint-Fury, *Saint-Domingue*, II, 181.

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Next to the agricultural system, the state of education in the republic probably had as much to do as anything with fixing the caste system upon Haiti. So long as the mass of people were not only black but illiterate as well, they would have no means of reaching a social status beyond the one in which they existed. Certainly the aspiring Negroes would not wish to enlighten them, for to stir up the whole people would destroy the very possibility of distinction. As W. S. Gilbert puts it, "When everyone is somebody, then no one's anybody." Public education, consequently, hardly advanced a step during Boyer's twenty-five years. It had had a feeble enough beginning under Pétion and remained, as it had been, a prerogative of the well-to-do.¹⁷⁵

Under the complaisant rule of Boyer, accordingly, the people of color came to regard themselves as the unquestioned elite. Their claim was shared, though not always acknowledged, by a small number of blacks (mostly from the North) who had been ancient libes in colonial Saint-Domingue or noblemen under Christophe; who were literate, or whose wealth and ambition attracted attention. Boyer's boast that "all the feelings and prejudices, either of olden times or of national origin, have been superseded by an intense patriotism" was pure buncombe, as he certainly knew.

If only the best brains of the colored group had been content to serve the government, Haiti might have profited from her situation; but lesser government officers were merely springboards for foreign trade in coffee and mahogany, or for the manipulation of business deals. Not "intense patriotism," as Boyer liked to think, but financial gain was the motivating force of the elite, as it had been from colonial times. The man who could amass a modest fortune, so that his children might be educated and their security assured, had done his duty, and he would have been regarded as quixotic to renounce business opportunities for the dubious honor of minor political office. As a consequence of this natural search for gain, the government during Boyer's administration became less and less efficient. Relatives of elite businessmen were given posts because the President could not afford to offend important families. These minor officials then performed their duties awkwardly, or neglected them, in "the unflinching obliquity of dullness."¹⁷⁵

Skin color became the obsession of high society. Those who had no other merit of which to boast could still revel in their complex-⁵⁶³

ROMAN CATHOLICISM

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Granted these obvious difficulties, there is still little to be said for the zeal or integrity of churchmen in Saint-Domingue. Father Cabon cites a report to Rome in 1794, which, he remarks, "was not designed to be made public, and does not bear the earmarks of passion," and which flatly states that "since the expulsion of the Jesuits, the curés have for the most part led lives so indecent . . . that the citizens and Negroes have lost all the sentiments of religion which the Jesuits gave them."¹ There had been distinguished churchmen in Saint-Domingue before 1790, authors, scientists, teachers of some note, but none appeared thereafter. The rich French colony was not a bright star in the Catholic crown.

Undeterred by those who might have been their spiritual guides, the white people followed the easy path of self-indulgence. The universal testimony of visitors is that, with a few notable exceptions, immorality and cruelty were daily commonplaces. To make a fortune was the prime ambition of every white man, since money made possible the luxurious enjoyment of this world's goods. Protest against money-making or soft living would have been futile. Administrative agencies turned public office to their own profit; judges sold justice to the highest bidder; planters drove their slaves to death; and priests dispensed religious solace for a tidy sum.

The freedmen, who in everything patterned their lives after social leaders in the white planter class, had no more concern for religion than their models. They attended Mass occasionally as a social event, where they might see and be seen. When in the latter days of the colony discriminatory legislation required that colored persons sit in separate parts of the church, most of the affranchis simply refrained from attending Mass: their religious zeal was not so great as to make them subsist to the public shame of segregation. In their daily lives, likewise, they followed the example of the white planters in pursuing pleasure rather than sobriety, "culture" rather than religious zeal. Like the whites, they were often licentious in their conduct. When it came their turn to direct affairs of state in free Haiti, there was little interest in spiritual matters among them. The intellectuals of the group paid homage to the liberal philosophers of the century rather than to religious thinkers.

If religion was at a low ebb in the prosperous days of the colony, it almost disappeared in the excitement of the years following the

2. 22, p. 11. *Result of the slaves (1791).*

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175 Since he was president for twenty-five years (normal ones, as things
642 go in Haiti), it is worth while to examine the functioning of the
643 kind of government the upper class favored.

175 President Boyer's education and outlook were wholly French. He
642 had formed his views of government principally upon French
643 models, yet when he became head of state he could not forget his
692 own military career. He said repeatedly that he wished to supersede
the military by the civil power, but somehow never got around to it.
The country was full of black generals, and it would have been
difficult to retire them, primarily because they were black. He estab-
lished courts to insure the rights of man, but since his newborn
judiciary lacked the prestige to command respect, interpretation of
the law came from the President—until before long he was himself
the law. With a logic characteristic of the French, he tried to make
the whole administration of the country orderly and tidy by codify-
ing laws, laying out spheres of governmental departments, and
properly ticketing matters in general. He had to be the sole judge of
the intention and operation of statutes, however, and if necessary
modify the nature of an act to suit his view of the public need. His
honest and generally upright character perhaps made his enormous
prerogatives conducive to the public good; but Boyer was a dictator
in spite of his Senate, since when he found a law working badly
he simply turned it from its normal course and gave it a quite
contrary effect.

[646] As the years of his long rule proceeded, he took more power to
himself. When his Senate would not pass bills as he proposed them,
• [661] he waited until they adjourned and then either neglected to execute
their laws, or instructed the government printing office to change
the wording. He clearly regarded the legislature as a necessary nu-
isance, to be kept as a sop to the elite and to preserve the appearance
of republicanism before the world. Representatives from the various
communes were recommended by the President, his nomination
amounting almost always to election.⁵

600 Boyer was overthrown by the Revolution of 1843, by all odds the

[643] 5. The task of governing the whole island was obviously heavier than governing a
fraction of it, so Boyer may have felt justified in his departures from strict constitu-
tionality. He was always an indefatigable worker, whose intentions were uniformly
laudable. He tried to rule alone, as had his illustrious predecessors. The hitch came
because he was not of their caliber. He was worthy, virtuous—and mediocre. He
would probably have made an excellent mayor of a French provincial town.

Boyer was overthrown by the Revolution of 1843, by all odds ^{the} POLITICS

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most important of Haitian upheavals. Since its effects were to be felt for the next seventy years in the extinction of representative government and the eclipse of the élite as political rulers, it is worthy of special attention. Paradoxically, it was a revolution fomented by the élite themselves. Its background and outcome reveal the power in word, and the impotence in deed, of this group by 1843.

The constitution of 1816, devised by Pétion's henchmen, had granted the president initiative in all laws except those concerning taxation. After the agreement of 1825 with France,⁶ however, Boyer, hard pressed by the need of paying the indemnity each year, began to restrict the number of officials, diminish their salaries, and veto all projects favorable to the development of public instruction and improvement which might cause further expenditure. By temperament he was an autocrat.⁷ Every valuable measure must come from him alone; whatever another person proposed he would find a thousand reasons to discard. Sarcastic and vain, he did not know how to smooth ruffled feelings or make conflicting groups reconcile their differences. His personal weaknesses of character alienated the sympathies of many once-devoted officials.

During his long presidency Boyer also systematically ignored the younger generation, men who admired the efforts of Pétion, ardent reformers who wished to devote their energies to the improvement of Haiti. The military career had no attraction for them: the higher ranks, alone bringing sufficient salary for a congenial way of life, were too few and one could achieve them only with difficulty, for since 1825 advancement had been submitted to rigorous rules. On the other hand, the paths of administration were severely guarded by those admirable great functionaries left over from the government of Pétion—men like Inginac and Imbert. But age had slowed their activity, and still Boyer kept them on. The younger generation mocked this "gerontocracy" and supported the parliamentary opposition.

The youth of the élite class continued to go to France for their education, returning to Haiti to take part in the lively political discussions which made one of their chief occupations. During the first decade of Boyer's administration they generally supported him, too

6. By which France recognized the independence of Haiti in return for the payment of a large annual indemnity.

7. "In everything, he wishes to dominate," Pétion had said of him.

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was well enough, but all upper-class landlords wanted the privilege of living in leisure on an income derived from the menial labor of black workers. Fraternity was a principle ridiculous to a group whose never-ceasing struggle was to confirm the separation of castes. The term "Liberal," then, was borrowed not from the revolutionary documents of the late eighteenth century, but from the parliamentary parties of the nineteenth—those who saw more opportunity for themselves and their group if the power of tyrants and kings could be curbed by legislatures. The idea was particularly congenial to the Haitian intelligentsia for the simple reason that the powerful rulers of Haiti, past and present, were Negroes who did not share the aims and ideals of the social upper class."

By holding such "liberal" views, the mulatto elite saw their one opportunity not only for curbing the strong men among the Negroes who again and again tried to rule Haiti as if it were a native African state and themselves the supreme chieftains, but also for indulging their own special penchants. A Senate filled with elite politicians suited the talents of the educated aristocrats. They liked constitutions and codes; the law was their favorite profession; they were adepts at drawing neat distinctions between this and that in an academic issue; polished oratory, skilful argument, fluent speech were knacks peculiar to them by temperament, position, education. Boyer had been the beau-ideal of the academic "liberals," with his talkative Senate, his complete set of Codes and national system of courts; the mid-century party members came to realize what they had lost by driving him out.

Every time the Nationalists came to power the colored elite suffered. Under Dessalines they lost greatly in property and position; Christophe had hated and hounded them; Soulouque put many of their leaders to death. The only monarchs Haiti ever had were blacks, and the two most tyrannical presidents in the first seventy-five years after independence were Nationalists (Pierrot, 1845-46, and Domingue, 1874-76).

The experience of the Liberal presidents with parliamentary institutions was not entirely a happy one, however. Pétion and Boyer had

12. It must be recalled that no parliaments of England, France, or the United States in the early nineteenth century had true democratic representation. Property qualifications for voting, rotten boroughs, and the persistence of privilege assured that only the "classes" should have full representation, and so rule the masses.

Even Geffrard the reformer,

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ably the ablest president in the second half-century, who was pledged to reduce the expenses of government (a promise which, since he was accustomed to a life of penury, should have been easy to fulfill), increased his own salary to \$50,000 a year, and allowed himself \$20,000 more annually for secret service and a similar sum "for the encouragement of arts and sciences." He bought two estates with government money; the meat bill of his family was charged to the budget of his bodyguard, and the family champagne bill to a hospital. After Geffrard, the presidency was openly regarded as the juiciest financial plum in Haiti which, if one could pluck it, would justify the necessary expenditures for a revolution. It seems from contemporary comment, indeed, that Geffrard's actions aroused not censure but rather envy, as if every ambitious Haitian would have welcomed the opportunity to do likewise. The biting critical Englishman, Sir Spenser St. John, railed with some justice, "Every Haitian appears fully persuaded that his countrymen never seek office except for the purpose of improving their private fortunes."¹⁵

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The legislature was never a real check upon the President. It was useful to him at times when he wished to delay action on some embarrassing imbroglio with a foreign power, for by referring a measure to the Senate he could stall it in tedious debate. Almost without exception, however, the legislature consisted of the President's men. Its halls were palaces of idle oratory. One whole session was devoted to a discussion of fitting the hall with cushioned seats; another to the propriety of appointing an interpreter for representatives who understood only Créole and not French. To make a man a Senator was a satisfactory way of paying a political debt. To be a Senator was to have social prominence, a salary of \$1,600 (decidedly a competence in nineteenth-century Haiti), an opportunity to speak before an audience—and no real responsibility.

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One may grant without debate the difficulties facing this small and poor country, a Negro state with great white neighbors who regarded it with something less than deference. Yet Haiti in its early days had real promise. Wherein lay its defects? Haitian thinkers knew the answers, and frequently indicted themselves.

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The want of education was a basic weakness. Those who believe in democracy need no rehearsal of the benefits of popular enlightenment. Because the great Negro heads of state were themselves im-

¹⁵ *Hayti, or the Black Republic*, p. 183.

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can "advice and approval," rather than with the legislature subject to popular control. Even under such restrictions the politically minded found ways of exerting pressure on the Marine authorities.

Out of the darkest days of military subjection by a foreign power came a changed order of politics in the country. The practically unbroken line of dull incompetents who had come into the presidency ended; instead of ignorant army leaders, educated men were once more in office; instead of Northern Negroes, élites of Port-au-Prince; instead of benighted martinets bewildered by world affairs, men who, if not great statesmen, at least had minds capable of understanding Haiti's relation to international economics and politics.

The élite were back in power. In the mind of every friend of Haiti arose the question whether the events between 1879 and 1915 had taught them lessons which would make their return to responsibility productive of great things for the country. Because of the abnormal situation resulting from the Occupation, the world depression, and the briefness of their new ascendancy, one cannot yet speak with assurance. Nevertheless, there are few encouraging signs. Political office is still regarded by most candidates in terms of their own advancement rather than service to Haiti. Very little has been done to extend the base of voting by developing local responsibility and education among the masses. Élite youths still receive a classical education, still disdain manual labor, still cherish the ideal of a graceful life of ease. The president still rules as an autocrat supported by the gendarmerie—substitute for the army of former days. One can see no decrease in social distinctions or in the disdain of the élite for peasant people; on the contrary, there has even been an increase of this feeling because the Occupation (through its Agricultural Service particularly) seemed to open paths of development to the peasants. Social antagonism, not social responsibility, still underlies political life."

To every one of these strictures there is a plausible reply. It is no light matter to unsettle the minds of nine tenths of a population by education, to cause an economic revolution by improving agricultural techniques, to admit to political life a people unaccustomed to

20. Dr. Jean Price-Mars, in *La Vocation de l'élite* (Port-au-Prince, 1919), passes, especially pp. 51 ff., urges the élite to accept their responsibilities rather than rest upon the debilitating assurance of their innate superiority.

3. The unimportance of the legislature. It 232 has made THE HAITIAN PEOPLE useful patron

646 age for the president to dispense, and has preserved the semblance of
642 republican government; but hardly half a dozen legislative sessions
in all Haitian history have contributed seminal ideas in politics or
initiated true reforms. How could they, indeed, when the president
was consistently a dictator of policy?

666 4. The undemocratic nature of the vote. Senators are chosen by
642 the representatives, and the two groups together have generally
elected the president, when he did not come to power by revolution.
The only chance people have had to vote has been for local
officials and representatives. In these cases, the vote has been limited
to the elite and the army, with the president's henchmen counting
the ballots. Since the Occupation there have been plebiscites on
constitutional changes, the people having the right to vote Yes or No.

692 5. The subservience of the courts to the president. They have been
643 filled with president's men, generally astute enough to consult presi-
642 dential wishes before handing down a decision. Foreign merchants
soon learned that they could expect little "justice" from the courts if
their own cause conflicted with special Haitian interests. Foreign
diplomats likewise learned that in crises the courts could involve the
simplest issue in such verbal complexity that months of patience
would be necessary to unwind the red tape.

641 6. The pliability of "constitutional rights." Freedom of speech and
• 661 of the press has been notably lacking, although scurrilous attacks on
642 the administration's enemies have often been permitted. Legislators
have been expelled. Graft has flourished. In 1833, for example, two
representatives were expelled from the House "for systematically
opposing the measures of the executive, and persisting in a demand
for a statement of public expenditures." A century later a senator was
expelled for almost the same reasons.

701 7. Militarism. Only in this respect is any real change apparent since
178 the American Occupation. The army was always large up to 1915,
642 and so constituted an economic drain as well as a political menace.
669 Generals had great power: they ruled each department and each
arrondissement, were subject only to the president, and were at the
bottom of every revolutionary movement.²² Since the Occupation

[162] 22. In 1842, when the population was still less than a million, there were in the dis-
[701] trict governments 9 generals, 63 colonels, 48 lieutenant colonels, 9 captains, 1 lieuten-
ant, and 28 medical officers; and in the standing army 33 colonels, 95 lieutenant
colonels, 825 captains, 654 lieutenants, 377 sublieutenants and ensigns, 6,315 noncom-
missioned officers, and 25 medical officers. The army had 28,000 soldiers and cost
about \$600,000 a year. See John Canlier, *Brigadier of Haiti*, pp. 88 ff.

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reason of his power to name agents accredited to foreign governments; with the approval of the Senate he made treaties and wars. In cases of malversation, or gross corruption, the president might be denounced by the Senate (his own nominees), and the High Court of Justice (his own appointees) would sit in judgment on him; matters [669] have never reached this pass, however, for the Haitian method of checking a president's "malversation" has been the more direct one of revolution.

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At a salary generally set in the neighborhood of thirty or forty thousand dollars the president could live luxuriously, the highest-paid person in Haiti. The salary combined with the prestige and perquisites of office was enough to explain the eagerness with which men sought the position. "Perquisites" often enough included graft.

Details of administration have been in the hands of various departments of state, their number depending upon the constitution then in force. As has been said, the president generally regarded his cabinet members as little more than clerks to attend to details. Only a few in the whole nineteenth century stand out prominently as directors of policy—Boyer as Pétion's secretary-general; Inginac, holding the same position under Boyer; Anténor Firmin, Hyppolite's foreign secretary; and a handful of others. During the four years, 1843-47, of "ephemeral governments" the cabinet ministers sometimes managed to rule their offices, and under the succession of ignorant Negro generals at the end of the century, if the educated élite secretaries had not taken charge of affairs no one would have handled them. Constitutional language made the cabinet officers seem more important than they were, however, for the actual position of a minister was usually that of head clerk, chief errand boy and handy man for the president, and convenient scapegoat when crises arose in foreign affairs, finances, public works, or other spheres.

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The legislative body has ordinarily consisted of two chambers, the Senate and the Chamber of Representatives. Senators must be thirty years old. They have ordinarily served a nine-year term, being available for reelection only after three years out of office. The method of choice curbed their power: the lower house selected each senator from a list of three nominated by the president for each vacancy. For a salary of sixteen hundred dollars and freedom from arrest in civil cases, all the senator had to do was to correspond with the president and lower house on public affairs, and decree appro-

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441 Justice in the courts was administered by Haitians whose narrow patriotism biased their decisions.

439 5. A temperamental tariff policy. Not only were imports subject
641 to a tariff which might be changed at the whim of any president, but
175 exports also were taxed. When an administration was in need of
651 funds it might suddenly, without warning, raise the tax on coffee
489 exports and so disrupt a merchant's business plans. The customs-
houses were in charge of Haitians who steadily became more ineffi-
cient and grasping as the century progressed, until many foreign
merchants felt that the only way of getting business dispatched was
by means of bribes. Examinations at customs were long drawn out,
often there was open thievery, and erroneous valuations were
common.

175 6. The burden of the indemnity to France. Contracted by Boyer
651 in 1825, this annual payment for sixty years was an incubus to every
B41 administration, leaving no surplus in the treasury for public works,
education, or any internal development; likewise, it made the threat
of foreign interference all the more imminent.

7. A debased currency. Pétion was the first president to devalue
money, and his example was frequently followed thereafter. Coun-
terfeiting was general. When a country's monetary system is
unstable, its officials accustomed to bribery and graft,¹⁷ and its
financial structure almost nonexistent, there is little chance for
sound economic development.

175 8. Dependence upon a single crop. Haitian economy was tied to
245 the staple coffee, grown with indifferent care, prepared for the
market in outmoded fashion, and sold in competition with coffee
from more scientifically run plantations in other tropical countries.

175 9. Political instability. The recurrent revolutions in Haiti made
439 foreigners chary of participating in the country's business, since the
66 government which made a contract might be out of office before the
ink was dry.

175 10. Indifference of the elite to economic pursuits. What profits
439 were obtainable went into the pockets of foreign merchants, not
565 those of Haitian businessmen. In 1842 the comparative exports of the

[643] 17. Sir Spencer St. John, always a bitter critic of Haiti, remarked (*Haiti, or The*
[150] *Black Republic*, p. 88) ironically that "Boyer had the rare quality of being honest,
[661] and left in the treasury, on his departure, the sum of \$200,000, the first and last chief
who was ever guilty of so unaccountable a weakness."

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175 Boyer carried on Pétion's policy of no taxation. It was not until the American
657 Occupation that Haitians could be said to be taxed. Ninety per cent of the state's
[652] income between 1900 and 1915 regularly came from tariffs, and only ten per cent
from internal taxes. Even the efforts of the Americans, resulting in the laws of 1904
and 1928, went on the whole restricted to a few excise taxes. A land tax was hope-
less, due to the utter confusion of titles and the stubborn impavory of peasant
squatters.¹

2. Monetary Policy of Pétion and Boyer

175 The monetary situation in Haiti was chaotic in its early days. The gold money
652 of France, Spain, England, and the United States circulated, as did small French
coins, and the coins and paper money created by the Haitian rulers, who had com-
plete control over money. For example, Pétion decreed² an increase in the value of
the *gourde d'Espagne* from 8 livres 5 sols, to 9 livres; of the French *écu* of 6 francs
from 9 livres to 9 livres 15 sols; and the 5 franc *écu* from 7 livres 10 sols to 8 livres
5 sols; this almost doubled the value of money in circulation. He also struck small
coins to replace the pieces of 30, 24, 15, 12, and 6 sols of France. His small coins were
merely token money.³ The paper currency created by Pétion and so easily counter-
feited has been mentioned.

[433] Boyer was continually in financial perplexities. Production was declining while
expenditures had to be radically increased on account of the settlement with
France in 1825. Boyer's budget was not a large one judged by modern standards,
the average expenditure each year being about \$5,000,000. To meet this, customs
duties on imports and exports brought in about \$2,200,000 annually; territorial
duties on produce, houses, patents or licenses, market fees, and the like, a similar
sum; but some half-million dollars had to be borrowed each year. The government
[316] hoped to get something from developing mines in the Spanish part of the island,
[425] but this hope failed. It was thought also that the sale of government lands might
[454] bring in some revenue, but few people wanted to invest money, when they had it,
in land, with agricultural affairs developing as they were and no way of making
[465] people work: investment in trade was more promising. The national treasury was
so empty that both the civil and military officials were poorly paid. It was fre-
quently said that almost all administrators and persons in authority were open to
[661] bribery. Meantime the number of civil servants was increasing: there was a swarm
[647] of hirelings and subalterns in every commune, like a host of vampires. By their
lack of honesty, conscientiousness, and efficiency, immense sums were lost an-
nually to the treasury.

1. See the *Report of the American High Commissioner* (1909), p. 19.

2. May 4, 1808.

3. Pétion voyant s'échapper de ses États les gourdes qu'il offrait aux déshérités avec Chris-
tophe, eut pour les retenir l'ingénieuse idée d'y pratiquer une trouée. Ce moyen était trop
effaçant pour ne pas réussir, et il était trop simple pour que l'empire n'en fût pas pénétré et au
moins par un équivalent. Ainsi, lorsqu'il en vint à battre monnaie, le chef de l'état du Sud
demanda le titre de sa gourde à peu près au titre de la gourde espagnole tant par son impor-
tance. Il lui donna 233 millions de fin." *Lapellatier de Saint-Pierre, Saint-Domingue*,
II, 194.